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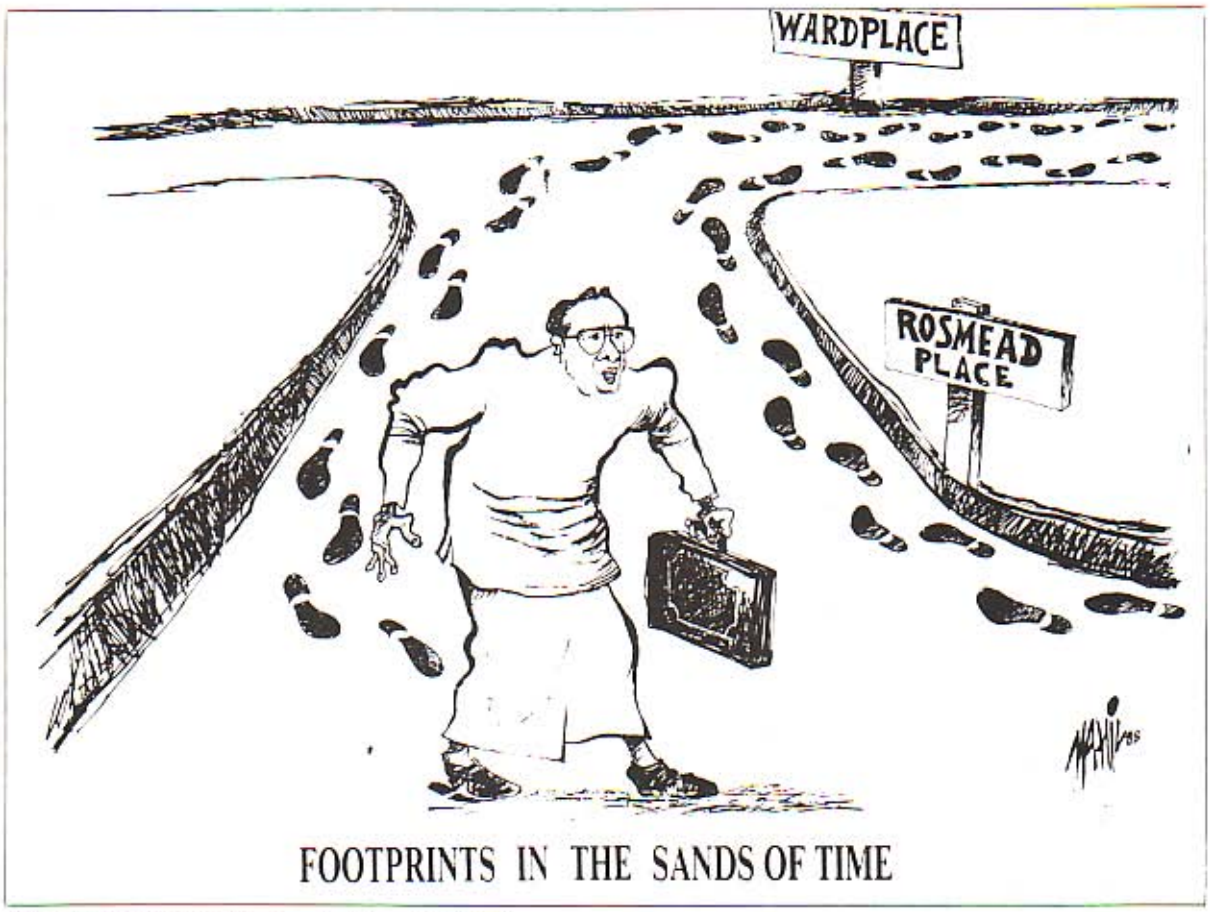
★ ***Ronnie de Mel joins the SLFP***



FOOTPRINTS IN THE SANDS OF TIME

BY COURTESY OF *"The Sunday Times"*, 14.8.88

★ IPKF LAUNCHES ALL OUT OFFENSIVE AGAINST LTTE

★ **NGOs Call for Ceasefire & Negotiations**

★ Discordant Accord

★ *LTTE seeks IPKF withdrawal*

★ **Life on the brink of endurance**

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CONTENTS

IPKF intensifies operation against LTTE....3

Ronnie De Mel Joins SLFP....4

LTTE seeks IPKF withdrawal....5

UN Sub Commission on Human Rights....6

Human Rights Violations Continue in Sri Lanka....7

Jaffna Rail Track Blasted....9

Discordent Accord....10

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CONTENTS

Readers' Forum....12

My Heart Weeps and Bleeds....13

The Tragedy of the Tamil Drop Outs..15

Role Models of Heroism among Tamils....19

Varsity Teachers Condemn Attack on Civilians....21

Classified advertisements....22

Padma Subrahmanyam – a Dancer with Unique Quality....23

FAST UNTO DEATH BY DETAINEES

The condition of Sellaiah Vasudevan, a long term detainee in the Boosa Detention Centre in south Sri Lanka, is reported to be critical. He is one among some who had launched a 'fast unto death' campaign to highlight their continued detention without trial.

Presently there are an estimated 858 persons held in detention in the Boosa Detention Centre, Magazine Prison in Colombo and the Prisons in Colombo and Galle. Among them are those who at some time belonged to various Tamil militant groups and others who had no such connections at all. The detainees are made up of : PLOT– 188, EPRLF– 155, TELO– 74, EROS– 72, LTTE– 59, Other Tamil militant groups– 46, and 264 persons unconnected with any militant or political group.

Since the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement in July last year, representations have been made on behalf of these detainees for their release, and Attorney-at-Law, Kumar Ponnampalam, has been taking a keen interest in their case. Appeals and petitions have been submitted to the authorities including President Jayawardene and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. In their appeals, the detainees had given assurances that they had accepted the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement, that they eschewed the use of violence and weapons, and that they would return to the path of democracy. The Minister of National Security insisted that these assurances should be contained in the form sworn affidavits, and this also had been complied with. Following further representations on their behalf, a total of 191 persons were released in two batches in May this year. The rest are continuing to languish in detention.

The fast unto death commenced on 14 August by three detainees, is aimed at drawing attention to the desperate plight of all persons who have been incarcerated and held in inhuman conditions. The three who are engaged in this death-fast are: Kaneshalingam Thevarajah of Kayts in Jaffna, 47 years old, father of 7 children and detained for the last 23 months; Selvarajah Pakiyanathan of Trincomalee, 44 years old, father of 5 children and held for 23 months; and Sellaiah Vasuthevan of Elkaduwa in Sembukawatte (plantation area). The Action Committee of the detainees have resolved to continue the fast unto death campaign on a relay basis.

The Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement provided that a general amnesty would be granted and all Tamil political detainees would be released. President Jayawardene does not lose time in repeating ad nauseam that the government had complied with its obligations under the Agreement and that all Tamil militant groups except the LTTE have agreed to return to the democratic process. Additionally, the detenus have individually submitted sworn affidavits giving assurances and undertakings in accordance with the government's requirements. That being the case, why has the government not released these detenus? Is this not a blatant violation of the provisions of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement?

The government of India which insists upon the Tamil militant groups to comply with provisions of the Agreement has an equal obligation to ensure that the Sri Lankan government for its part does not renege on its obligations. More than the obligations under the Agreement, the continued detention without trial of these detainees constitutes a violation of the basic obligations of Sri Lanka under international law. The detained persons should be released before any one of them dies in consequence of their campaign of 'fast unto death'.

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IPKF INTENSIFIES OPERATIONS AGAINST LTTE

Speculation is mounting that the current intensified military operations by the IPKF against the LTTE in the northern Vavuniya and Mullaitivu areas are designed to enable the holding of Provincial Council elections in the northern and eastern provinces before the end of October this year.

Following the return to Colombo of Indian High Commissioner, J.N. Dixit, after a series of meetings with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and other senior officials in Delhi, Colombo sources reveal that orders have gone out to the IPKF Commanders to intensify their operations against the LTTE on all fronts.

An estimated 20,000 Indian soldiers have been inducted into the Vanni area, particularly south of Mankulam and Odduchuddan and east of the Vavuniya–Jaffna trunk road in two cordons with the intention of bottling up the LTTE militants in their jungle hideouts and bases. The double cordon is aimed at preventing the LTTE men moving out and cutting them off from receiving food and logistic support.

The current offensive described by the IPKF as Operation 3 has resulted in fierce fighting between the IPKF and LTTE cadres. Reliable reports indicate that the LTTE is offering fierce resistance on all fronts in spite of the overwhelming number of men thrown into the battle by the IPKF.

The IPKF has virtually swamped the area with men and weapons and in certain villages, it is reported that there are about 40 IPKF men for every house.

The continuing military encounters have resulted in a large influx of refugees into the Vavuniya town proper. Around 20,000 Tamil civilians have fled their homes in the Mullaitivu and Vavuniya districts and sought refuge in schools, churches, temples and other public buildings.

A report datelined 27 August stated that the unofficial curfew clamped on northern districts on 24 August had been extended indefinitely to enable the IPKF to launch an all out offensive on LTTE positions. As a result of these operations in which thousands of troops are involved and heavy artillery and helicopter gunships, a large exodus of civilians had been reported from various areas.

Providing relief to the helpless refugees has become difficult owing to continued fighting in the vicinity and the frequent imposition of round-the-clock curfews. Hundreds of families are reported to be trapped in some areas where heavy fighting is continuing.

The IPKF has deployed heavy weapons including shelling and firing rockets from helicopters in an attempt to break LTTE resistance to advancing troops. An unaccountable number of civilians are reported to be killed in these operations.

Fighting was reported to be very fierce in Semamadu, Nettiyakulam and Ilamaruthankulam from where over 500 families have deserted their homes and poured into Vavuniya.

It is reported that heavy casualties have been suffered by both sides. On August 19, the Indian High Commission in Colombo claimed that 11 LTTE militants were shot dead and 8 Indian soldiers including an officer were missing in action. However, sources from Vavuniya stated that 9 out of the Tamils killed were civilians who were attempting to escape from the fighting.

The IPKF have been daily claiming that they had destroyed a number of LTTE jungle hideouts and bases, captured a large quantity of weapons and explosives and killed scores of 'Tigers' and taken into custody many more.

The LTTE denied that they had lost large numbers from their ranks as claimed by the IPKF. They made the counter-claim that over 40 IPKF men had been killed for the loss of only a few Tiger cadres. They also claimed to have shot at and damaged two Indian helicopters.

Reports from Colombo datelined 26 August stated that 12 more IPKF men including a Major and a Lieutenant were missing in action and it was suspected that the LTTE might have captured them. The IPKF had launched a massive search operation for the missing men.

A report datelined 17 August stated that about 300 Tamil men, alleged by the IPKF of belonging to the LTTE, were rounded up following an intensive search operation the IPKF carried out during the previous three days in Omanthai six miles off Vavuniya town. Most of them were taken in the course of a house-to-house search operation and some others from passing vehicles. The IPKF had also issued a stern warning to all residents in the area not to give accomodation to 'outsiders', and threatened with 'grave consequences' if the warning was not heeded.

JAFFNA: Latest reports indicate that the IPKF has launched fresh cordon and search operations in northern Jaffna on the alleged ground that the LTTE was making an effort to regroup itself in the peninsula. Incidents of attacks and counter-attacks between the IPKF and the LTTE cadres have also increased. Unofficial curfews have been imposed in various parts of Jaffna without prior warning causing considerable inconvenience to the people.

The IPKF rounded up 18 persons in a search operation launched following the killing of an IPKF soldier on 14 August at Kankesanthurai. On 15 August, an IPKF soldier was blown up by a mine blast at Soranampathu in Jaffna.

A grenade attack was made upon the official vehicle used by the IPKF Commandant, Brigadier R.S. Kahlon on 22 August near the Jaffna Kachcheri. At the time of the attack, the Brigadier was not in the vehicle. It is also reported that on 23 August, the Navy Patrol apprehended six persons off the northern coast at Thondamanar when they were attempting to go towards South India. In Akkaraiyan in Jaffna, a powerful claymore mine was detonated allegedly by LTTE cadres in which several persons were injured.

Five IPKF soldiers were seriously injured by a mine explosion at Vannikulam in Jaffna on 23 August.

NINE KILLED IN TRINCO

Nine persons including a Sri Lankan soldier, D. Chandrasekera, belonging to the Gajaba Regiment were killed and 20 injured in a bomb explosion near the Trincomalee Clock Tower on 16 August. An indefinite curfew was imposed immediately following the explosion.

The bomb blast was carried out, allegedly by LTTE cadres, to coincide with the opening of the market which was shut down for repairs following a previous bomb attack on July 21.

The civilian victims of the explosion included Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims.

Additional contingents of Indian troops were rushed to Trincomalee following the explosion as tension mounted in the city. Heavily armed IPKF men patrolled the streets.

A bomb exploded in a cinema at Kantalai on 21 August ripping through the building a few minutes before the 6pm show was to commence.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

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PEOPLE & POLITICS by Shanthi

RONNIE DE MEL JOINS SLFP

Ronnie de Mel's erstwhile colleagues of the ruling United National Party (UNP) which he had served for 11 years as Minister of Finance and Planning denied him the opportunity of the traditional farewell speech to mark his well publicised cross-over from the government benches to the opposition. Ronnie had in advance sought the indulgence of the Speaker to make his dramatic gesture. He came with a well prepared speech. As the appointed time of 9.38 am on 12 August arrived, there were less than 20 MPs in Parliament. It was filled with MPs only a few minutes earlier. The Speaker's attention was drawn by one UNP MP to the lack of a quorum and the sessions were promptly adjourned despite protestations from Ronnie, the deserter.

Speaking to the Parliamentary Press Corps from the Opposition Leader's office shortly following his disappointing experience at the hands of his erstwhile UNP colleagues, Ronnie after announcing his resignation from the UNP 'with immediate effect', exclaimed, "I was not allowed to make a farewell speech after being a Parliamentarian for 21 years. For 11 years, I was the Minister of Finance in the UNP government. I ask: Is this the democracy in Sri Lanka now? Is this the freedom of speech the people enjoyed and is this the freedom of speech given to Members of Parliament? I can only say, Oh! liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name? Oh! democracy, what greater crimes are committed in thy name?" The complaint about the UNP's lack of democracy sounded hollow for it came from a man who was one of its co-practitioners and beneficiaries for the last 11 years.

Illfated speech

Ever since Ronnie made his illfated speech at the tail end of the debate on his eleventh consecutive budget late last year, his future in the UNP became a big question mark. In a rather uncharacteristic intervention by a Minister who prided himself as the then longest serving Finance Minister in the country, Ronnie said:

"This, I feel, may be my last budget. I think eleven is enough. I hope we will have Provincial Council elections and also Parliamentary elections next year . . . I think we should hold them before the people of this country get up and say, 'In God's name, Go' . . . I think it is no secret that if I had a free vote, I would not have voted for the Referendum . . . Most of our troubles stemmed from the fact that we did not hold Parliamentary elections at the correct time . . . I think this Parliament is stale. It is obsolete and obsolescent."

Ronnie is no fool. He certainly would have known of the inevitable consequences of such a scathing denunciation of President Jayawardene's unique practice of his 'Five Star' version of democracy! His arch rivals within the government bayed for his blood. He resigned before he was sacked for breaching cabinet collective responsibility. The UNP's Working Committee called for his explanation for alleged infringement of party discipline. Efforts were made to get Ronnie to retract his speech to enable his early rehabilitation into the Cabinet. But he was only prepared to express his regrets for any feelings of hurt he might have caused. The Working Committee was not satisfied. Ronnie's future in the UNP hung in the balance.

Characteristic move

Ronnie went abroad on a prolonged holiday to allow things to 'settle down'. When he returned, he remained out of the limelight. When clear signals were given by the President that the Presidential elections would be held by the end of this year and the general election next year, Ronnie presumably gave thought to his future political prospects and made his characteristic move. He resigned from the UNP and promptly joined the Sri Lanka Freedom Party.

Changing parties is not a novel experience for Ronnie, the most intelligent political weathercock in the country according to the Opposition Leader, Anura Bandaranaike. Amply provided with ancestral inheritence, he had resigned from the then prestigious Ceylon Civil Service in the late 1950's, and became an instant admirer of the late Philip Gunawardene who was at that time leading the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna. Then he became one of the vociferous leaders of the Bauddha Jathika Balavegaya (National Buddhist Force), an extremist Sinhala-Buddhist ethno-religious organisation, along with the late L.H. Methananda and N.Q. Dias. He joined the SLFP in 1964 and was virtually in the political wilderness along with the SLFP when it was defeated by the UNP in 1965 general elections. SLFP-led United Front was swept into power with a near 3/4 majority. However, his expectations of a reasonable high portfolio commensurate with his self-proclaimed qualifications and undisguised ambition did not materialise. During the waning days of the United Front regime, he resigned from the SLFP and functioned as an independent MP from the opposition.

Severe blow

In the run-up to the 1977 general elections, Ronnie joined the UNP which he had previously denounced as an anti-national capitalist gang. After the elections, President Jayawardene rewarded him with the cabinet portfolio of Minister of Finance and Planning, a post he held for 11 years.

The resignation of Ronnie is a severe blow for the UNP and President Jayawardene in particular. During the critical days immediately preceeding and following the July 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement, Ronnie loyally stood by the President and supported his actions. This was the time Prime Minister Premadasa and Minister of National Security Lalith Athulathmudali openly expressed disagreement with the President's actions and indeed defiantly boycotted the ceremonies connected with the Indian PM's visit and the ceremonies connected with the Agreement. Therefore, it came as no surprise when Ronnie disclosed that the President had tried to prevent his resignation by offering him a combination of important portfolios such as the Ministry of Finance and Planning, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Provincial Administration.

It does not seem that Ronnie resigned from the UNP in consequence of any serious differences about policy or principles. The main reason would appear to be that his rivals within the UNP hierarchy obstructed his honourable return to the fold by insisting on a full retraction of his speech of December last year. Even that speech was not the product of a conscious commitment to the higher ideals of representative democracy on his part. Ronnie says that he made that speech at a time of great stress. The UNP's General Secretary, Harsha Abeywardene, had been gunned down by the JVP and shock-stricken MPs were getting ready to attend the funeral; the atmosphere in the country was heavy with tension and the speech was intended to defuse the situation.

Wisest fool

For the SLFP, which has been in disarray and without men of heavyweight class at leadership level, Ronnie joining it has been a big boost. In his first intervention in Parliament as an opposition MP, he made a wide ranging and scathing attack upon his erstwhile colleagues of the UNP. During the debate on the extension of the Emergency on 25 August, he charged 'powerful sections' within the govern-

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ment of sabotaging the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement and thereby delaying the withdrawal of the Indian troops from the island. Ronnie, who had always advocated a negotiated political solution to the ethnic conflict instead of the military solution that the Minister of National Security had been pursuing, said that the government could have solved the problem without the involvement of India if 'certain powerful elements within the government did not engage in a tug-of-war and acts of sabotage.'

Directing his attack on the Minister of National Security, Lalith Athulathmudali, in connection with the debacle of the bogus agreement with the JVP, Ronnie said, "There should have been a real agreement unlike the spurious one signed recently which led to the greatest faux pas of the century. It was done by the wisest fool in the country."

A leading light of the extremist Bauddha Jathika Balawegaya in the 1960's, on the ethnic question Ronnie turned out to be one of the more moderate Ministers in Jayawardene's cabinet. He supported the setting up of Provincial Councils and the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement. He was the Minister-in-Waiting when the Indian PM arrived in the island to sign the Agreement. Now he has joined the SLFP, a party which boycotted the ceremonies associated with the signing of the Agreement; a party which has declared its opposition to that Agreement and the establishment of the Provincial Councils. Will Ronnie display the cynical opportunism characteristic of many Sri Lankan politicians and turn out to be the 'champion of the Sinhala race', or will he make an effort to wean the SLFP away from its entrenched extremist positions on the ethnic question? The next few months will provide the answer.

LTTE SEEKS IPKF WITHDRAWAL AND REFERENDUM ON ACCORD

The Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka should withdraw to be replaced by an international peace keeping force and a referendum in the Tamil areas should be held supervised by an international monitoring body to determine whether the Tamil people accept the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement, states a press release issued by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The text of the press release dated 9 August states:

"Since the signing of the Rajiv-J.R. Accord, the Indian position has been that the LTTE should lay down arms and accept the Accord. But this accord was signed without taking into consideration the aspirations of the Tamil people.

"Following the Accord, the Indian army of aggression entered Tamil Eelam under the guise of a Peace Keeping Force. Yet the problems of the Tamils have not been resolved. Instead, the Tamil problem became more aggravated than even before.

"Sinhala colonisation continued in Tamil Eelam. The other militant groups were trained and armed and brought to Tamil Eelam with the sole objective of wiping out the Liberation Tigers. The Indian Government kept quiet when Sri Lanka arrested our leaders and attempted to take them to Colombo by force. The Indian Peace Keeping Force which was sent to Tamil Eelam to protect the Tamils, functioned under Jayewardene who was committing genocide of the Tamils.

"Our position is that the Rajiv-J.R. Accord was not intended to safe-guard the interests of the Tamils. But we pledged to co-operate with the implementation of the Accord if it protects the interests of our people.

"The Indian government and its Prime Minister have unleashed a malicious propaganda campaign in the world arena against the LTTE, claiming that our organisation was frightened to face the people in the elections and therefore, refuse to lay down the arms. They allege that the LTTE has no concern about the interests of the Tamil people and claimed that the people of Tamil Eelam support the Rajiv-J.R. Accord. Though it claims itself as the largest democracy in the world, the Government of India is refusing to hold elections in Tamil Nadu saying that conditions are not suitable. Yet the Government of India insists that there should be elections in Tamil Eelam.

"We have been exposing to the world the aggressive tendencies of the Indian government and the false propaganda carried out by the Indian state to cover up its intentions.

"The problems of the Tamil people are not going to be resolved if the LTTE accepts the Accord, lay down the arms and participate in the elections. It is because of this fact we have been pleading, over and over again, that the Government of India should effect an unconditional ceasefire and resume negotiation to discuss the problems facing our people. The government of India has rejected our pleas and campaign that we are frightened to face the people in the elections. We are prepared to face our people in the elections. But we want to ask whether India is prepared to face our people. We wish to call upon the Government of India to hold a referendum to determine the following issues.

1. The people of Tamil Eelam do not accept the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord.

2. The Indian army of aggression should be withdrawn from Tamil Eelam. An International Peace Keeping force should be sent to Tamil areas.

3. The Liberation Tigers are the representatives of the people of Tamil Eelam.

4. An International observers group should be appointed to monitor the referendum.

"The LTTE is prepared to accept the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord if they are defeated in the referendum.

"We are aware that the Government of India will not respond favourably to our request. But our call for a referendum will definitely indicate to the world that the LTTE is prepared to face the people at any time."

COURT ORDERS IPKF COMMANDER TO PRODUCE DETAINEE

The Court of Appeal directed Brigadier Manjith Singh, Commanding Officer, IPKF camp Vavuniya, to produce in Court Kenga Parameswaran, who it is alleged is detained at the IPKF camp, Vavuniya

The Directive follows the failure of Brigadier Singh to respond to notice issued on him, on May 6 to appear in Court.

The petitioner in this case Sumathy Parameswaran, sister of Kenga, alleges that her brother a volunteer attached to the Refugees Rehabilitation Fund was arrested by the officers of the IPKF camp, Vavuniya on April 5 and is presently detained at the camp.

When the matter came up in Court, Mr. Kumar Ponnambalam, Senior Counsel for the petitioner submitted that Brigadier Manjith Singh, is subject to the laws of this land as long as he lives here.

Counsel moved that a Writ of Habeas Corpus be issued on Brigadier Singh, directing him to produce Kenga in Court forthwith.

Mr. Ponnambatam also told Court that representations made by his junior counsels and the Government Agent, Vavuniya to the Commanding Officer of the IPKF camp, had been of no avail.

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UN Sub-Commission on Human Rights

NGOs CALL FOR CEASEFIRE AND NEGOTIATIONS

Attacks on Human Rights Workers Condemned

Several UN recognised Non-Governmental Organisations called for a ceasefire in the present fighting between the Indian Peace Keeping Force and the dominant Tamil militant group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and for a negotiated political solution to conflict in Sri Lanka during the 40th Session of the UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (generally known as the Human Rights Sub-Commission).

While condemning the violations of human rights by the Sri Lankan security forces and the IPKF, they also denounced the targetting of independent human rights organisations and individual activists. Special attention was drawn to the death threats made by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) upon human rights organisations in south Sri Lanka and the murder of Fr. Chandra Fernando the abduction of K. Kanthasamy by members of some Tamil militant groups in the north and east of the country.

The following is the text of the intervention made by the Secretary General of International Alert, Mr. Martin Ennals, on behalf of the Minority Rights Group. His intervention was endorsed and co-sponsored by several other NGOs including Human Rights Advocates, Pax Cristi, International Commission of Jurists, Pax Romana, League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples, International Movement for Fraternal Union Among Races and People, and Minority Rights Group:–

"The UN Commission on Human Rights, its Sub-Commission and other international human rights organisations have been deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Sri Lanka in the context of the ethnic conflict that has been plagueing the island for the past several years.

"Among other issues, arbitrary arrests, detention without trial for prolonged periods, torture of detainees, deaths in custody, extra-judicial killings and the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and Emergency Regulations promulgated under the country's internal security laws have been the subject of several reports by reputed international human rights organisations and Human Rights Commission's Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and the UN Special Rapporteurs on Torture and Arbitrary Killings.

"The concern with which the Commission on Human Rights viewed the situation in Sri Lanka was reflected when the Commission at its 43rd Sessions unanimously adopted a resolution on Sri Lanka.

Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement

"The signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement in July 1987 by Sri Lanka's President J.R. Jayawardene and the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi raised much hope about a negotiated peaceful resolution of the ethnic conflict, a return to harmonious relationship between the island's Sinhala and Tamil communities and an end to abuse of human rights.

"The Agreement, inter alia, provided for a degree of devolution of executive and legislative powers through the establishment of Provincial Councils as a means of meeting the demand for autonomy by the Tamil community, the surrender of weapons by Tamil militant groups, a general amnesty for Tamil political prisoners and for the discussion on 'residual matters' in dispute. Following an invitation by President Jayewardene, the Indian Peace Keeping Force arrived in the island in the wake of the signing of the Agreement.

"One year after the Agreement, it is evident that the hopes and expectations raised a year earlier have not been fulfilled.

- To begin with, extremist elements within the Sinhala community represented by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and the JVP (Peoples Liberation Front) opposed the Agreement and the latter initiated a campaign of violence which continues to this day unabated. Government party members and supporters, state officials and security service personnel, and even those belonging to the opposition United Socialist Alliance which support the Agreement have become victims of this campaign of terror and murder.
- The Provincial Council Law enacted by the government in pursuance to the Agreement has been described as inadequate to meet with 'aspirations' of the Tamil people. The Agreement also provided for further negotiations on outstanding matters but such negotiations have not take place.
- There was renewed violence in the north and east of the country in consequence of internecine armed fighting between and among Tamil militant groups and following attacks upon Sinhala settlers in the eastern province.
- There was only a partial surrender of weapons by Tamil militant groups.
- Dispute in regard to the composition of an interim administration for the north and east remained unresolved.
- On the alleged ground that the Tamil militant groups had not observed the Agreement in regard to the surrender of weapons, the Government suspended the release of Tamil political prisoners which it had begun immediately after the Agreement.
- The dominant Tamil militant group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) accused the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) of assisting the other Tamil militant groups to launch attacks upon the LTTE, whereas other Tamil militant groups accused the LTTE of trying to physically eliminate them. The LTTE has been asserting its claim to 'sole representation' on behalf of the Tamils but the other Tamil militant groups have contested this claim.
- Eventually the IPKF launched an offensive in October 1987 against the LTTE and its bases claiming that the offensive was aimed at enforcing the provisions of Agreement in regard to the surrender of weapons. The resulting confrontation between the IPKF and LTTE has been fierce and is continuing to this day. Besides the casualities on both sides to this confrontation, over 1000 Tamil civilians are estimated to have died in the offensive mounted by the IPKF in the northern city. Many buildings and homes have been destroyed. There are many independent reliable reports of arbitrary killings and rape of women in many instances attributed to the IPKF.
- The IPKF is presently engaged

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in cordon and search operations in the north and east of the country. Hundreds of Tamil youth whom the IPKF alleges as members of the LTTE have been rounded up and detained in the course of these operations. Instances of torture and deaths in custody have been established by reliable testimony.

● The glimmer of hope raised by 'informal negotiations' between Indian officials and LTTE leaders in Madras and South India disappeared when negotioations broke down in early July this year. Since then, the operations by the IPKF have been intensified and the LTTE has expressed its determination to engage in a protracted guerilla struggle.

In the South

● The JVP continues with its campaign of killing all those who support the grant of limited autonomy through the establishment of Provincial Councils and those who support the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement. An estimated 325 persons have been killed in the course of this campaign.

● The Government has responded to this JVP campaign by resorting to the use of arbitrary arrests and detention of persons alleged to be members of the JVP. Many cases of torture and 'disappearances' also have been reported. To meet the threat of individual assassinations, the Government has promoted the creation or armed private 'vigilantes', and distributed weapons to Ministers, MPs,s and other senior state officials besides security service personnel. There is also increased use of the Special Task Force and other paramilitary forces. The government has also enacted a law granting immunity to security service personnel who might break the law in the course of performing their functions.

Attacks on Human Rights Workers

● For the first time, human rights activists and independent social and relief workers have become targets of non-state armed entities.

● Organisations like the Civil Rights Movement, Campaign for the Release of Political Prisoners, Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality, Centre for Society and Religion, Marga Institute, etc., which have been active in the past in raising issues concerning the violation of human and democratic rights, and which have advocated a negotiated political solution to the ethnic conflict by the grant of the legitimate rights of the Tamil people, and which supported the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement as a means to settle the conflict have received death threats from the Patriotic Armed Unit, which is believed to be the armed wing of the JVP. It is this organisation which assassinated the leader of the United Socialist Alliance, Mr Vijaya Kumaranatunga.

● In the north and east of the island, independent human rights activists, members of local Citizens Committees and Relief and Social Service organisations have not only come under pressure to fall in line with the demands of armed groups, but have also been killed, kidnapped or disappeared. Members of Citizens Committees who have an independent approach are forced to resign and in their place those who are likely to fall in line are substituted. A Catholic priest, Father Chandra Fernando who was the Secretary of the Batticaloa Citizens Committee in the eastern province was murdered in his own church in June this year allegedly by an armed Tamil group. A dedicated and committed human righs activist and who concentrated his efforts to provide relief and rehabilitation in Tamil areas, Mr K. Kanthasamy was kidnapped by an armed Tamil group in northern Jaffna on June 19 and has not been seen since. Eye-witnesses to the kidnapping have alleged that a Tamil militant was responsible for his kidnapping and 'disappearance'.

● Such targetting, threats, kidnappings and killings pose a grave danger to independent and impartial human rights, social and relief workers.

"The Commission on Human Rights and its Sub-Commission and Non-Governmental Organisation concerned with the situation in Sri Lanka have at all times advocated the non-use of violence and called upon all parties to arrive at a negotiated solution to the ethnic conflict and other associated problems facing the people of Sri Lanka. They have also called for an end to human rights violations and impartial investigations into such violations.

"Taking account of the present situation in Sri Lanka, we urge the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities to:

● Call for a ceasefire of armed hostilities between the IPKF and the LTTE;

● Call upon all parties to recognise the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement as a basis for the settlement of the ethnic problems, and to initiate negotiations on outstanding matters in dispute with a view to reaching a comprehensive negotiated settlement:

● Specifically call upon the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and the Peoples Liberation Front (JVP) to join in the process of helping the resolution of the problem by negotiations; and in this context call upon the Peoples Liberation Front (JVP) to end its present armed campaign;

● Call upon the Tamil militant groups to bring an end to their internecine armed conflicts and resolve their differences by democratic discussion recognising each other's rights to exist and function within the framework of the law and generally accepted principle of democracy;

● Call upon the government to release all political prisoners forthwith;

● Call upon the government to institute impartial investigations into all cases of alleged torture arbitrary killings and 'disappearances';

● Condemn the killing of Rev. Father Chandra Fernando and the abduction of K. Kanthasamy, call for the release of the latter, and call upon all parties, including the government, the JVP and Tamil militant groups, to recognise the right of independent human rights activists, members of Citizen Committes, Relief and Social Service organisations to perform their much valued services without pressure, threat or intimidation.

● Call upon the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and the Special Rapporteurs on Torture and Arbitrary Killings to pursue their investigations into violations of human rights and humanitarian law in Sri Lanka."

"Human Rights Violations Continue In Sri Lanka"

The following is an excerpt relating to the situation in Sri Lanka from the speech made during the recently held UN Sub-Commission on Human Rights by Ms. Sandra Coliver on behalf of Human Rights Advocates:

"Human Rights Advocates join with other NGOs that have addressed the Sri Lanka situation in expressing our deep concern over continuing violations of human rights committed by all parties to the conflict there. The parties include the armies of the two governments involved – the Indian Peace Keeping Force and the Sri Lankan Army – and the two non-state militant forces, those of the Sinhalese including the Peoples Liberation Front or JVP, and those of the Tamils, including the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

"Human Rights Advocates is especially alarmed by attacks during the past year on human rights defenders, including Father Chandra Fernando and Mr. Kanthasamy. Those two people, and other members of citizens committees and relief and social service organizations, far from using or advocating violence, actively have been working for a restoration of peace and respect from human rights.

Continued on page 9

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From page 7

"Since the Commission, in resolution 1987/61, expressed its concern as to the situation, India and Sri Lanka, in July of 1987, entered into an Accord. Now, one year after the signing of that Accord, it is clear that expectations for a prompt and peaceful resolution of the conflict have not been fulfilled. To the contrary, human rights violations continue; and the Sri Lankan Government has neither been able to maintain respect for human rights and humanitarian law nor cooperated sufficiently with the International Committee of the Red Cross.

"Accordingly, Mr. Chairman, Human Rights Advocates respectfully urged the Sub-Commission, this session, to call the situation in Sri Lanka again to the attention of the Commission and, in particualar:

(1) To request the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and the Special Rapporteurs on torture and on summary and arbitrary executions to vigorously pursue investigations of reliably attested charges of violations;

(2) To call on the Government of Sri Lanka to permit the International Committee of the Red Cross to fulfill its functions, including the provision of assistance and protection to victims of all affected parties; and to institute impartial investigations into all allegations of extrajudicial killings, disappearances, acts of torture, and unlawful detentions;

(3) To call for a ceasefire between the IPKF and the LTTE;

(4) To call on all parties to recognize the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord as a basis for the settlement;

(5) To condemn all extrajudicial killings, disappearances, acts of torture, and unlawful detentions;

(6) To call on each party to end the commission of those violations for which it is responsible; and

(7) To call on all parties to respect the right of human rights defenders to monitor, publicize, and protest violations, without intimidation or persecution."

THONDAMAN SEEKS MORE TV TIME FOR TAMILS

The Minister of Rural Industries and President of the Ceylon Workers Congress, Mr.S. Thondaman, has told the Chairman of the Sri Lanka Rupavahini (TV) Corporation of the need for telecasting more Tamil TV programmes.

Mr. Thondaman has pointed out that in the multi-ethnic society in Sri Lanka, Tamil programmes should have a fair share of TV time and at present, Tamil TV viewers would appear to have good reasons to say that they were being neglected.

In his letter to the Chairman, Mr. Thondaman has stated that he was aware of the difficulties in regard to producing Tamil programmes of quality locally. He had suggested that until good and adequate number of Tamil programmes were produced locally, Rupavahin should consider buying some of the excellent Tamil programmes produced in Madras.

SP & DRIVER SHOT DEAD IN JAFFNA

The Superintendent of Police in Jaffna, Mr. P. Rajeswaran and his driver K.A. Paul, a police constable were shot dead by a group of three Tamil youth on August 7.

Mr. Rajeswaran whose office was located in the Jaffna fort had gone in his official car to visit his family in Tholpuram some 6 miles off Jaffna when he was confronted by the three gunmen near his home. The driver was ordered to get off the car, asked to run and as he ran was gunned down. Rajeswaran and his daughter who were in the car were also ordered out, the daughter was asked to move away from her father, and the SP was gunned down in front of his screaming daughter with automatic weapons.

SP Rajeswaran had assumed duties in Jaffna a few weeks after the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement in July last year. He was not engaged in any normal police functions as there are no police stations functioning in Jaffna.

Soldier guns down two Colleagues

A soldier shot down two of his colleagues at the Unnaruwa Army Camp in the Minuwangoda Police area and got away with a Chinese-made T56 automatic assault rifle on 14 August.

They said the incident occured around 10.00pm in the camp, situated in a Sarvodaya building about one and a half miles from the Minuwangoda Police station on the Andiambalama-Minuwangoda road.

Police said that the suspect-soldier is believed to have escaped in a van and all Police stations were informed of the incident immediately after it was reported.

Police said they suspect the soldier to be a subversive.

In a bid to take no chances, cordon and search operation was conducted in the vicinity of the incident in a bid to arrest the suspect-soldier if he was anywhere around there.

Sunday night's incident was similar to the Oruwela incident where a soldier shot dead several of his colleagues, Police said. The Unnaruwa shooting and escape were 'well planned', Police added.

The suspect-soldier, Police said, 'wanted to take away two or three T56s. Somehow his plan failed and he had to be satisfied with only one of them.

JAFFNA RAIL TRACK BLASTED 7 IPKF MEN KILLED

Train services to Jaffna were again suspended following a land mine explosion which blasted the northern rail track three miles south of Mankulam on 13 August.

The Jaffna bound Yal Devi train which departed on August 12 at 11.30pm from Colombo Central Fort station with approximately 1,500 passengers reached Puliyankulam by 9.30am on 13 August. When it was realised that the track had been blasted, the train returned to Vavuniya having dropped the passengers at Puliyankulam from where they reached their destinations with great difficulty by private transport.

The train services to Jaffna which had been suspended for a year were resumed only on 5 August to be run during weekends. Following the blast the Railway authorities have announced an indefinite suspension of services to Jaffna.

The IPKF launched an immediate cordon and search operation and while attempting to repair the damaged track became victims of three other land mine explosions caused allegedly by Tamil militants belonging to the LTTE. It is reported that 7 members of the IPKF were killed and a number of their vehicles were damaged by these explosions.

Although the destruction of the railway track is attributed to the LTTE, it has been speculated that there are others who do not want a resumption of train services to Jaffna. A lucrative private coach transport service has come into being in recent years between Jaffna and Colombo, and it is suggested that these vested interests might have had a hand in seeing a continued suspension of the train services.

In the meantime, the IPKF Commandant's office in Jaffna issued an announcement fixing the fares between Colombo and Jaffna for cushioned coaches and mini buses – the fare for a single journey in a cushioned coach is Rs. 100. and for a mini bus is Rs. 90. The order states that the fares should be displayed on windscreens of the vehicles with immediate effect and warns of drastic action including confiscation of vehicles if passengers are called upon to pay more than the fixed rate.

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DISCORDANT ACCORD

India blundered badly in Sri Lanka

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's 'accords' had acquired such a malodour by July 29, 1987, when he signed an agreement with President J.R.Jayewardene on the Sri Lankan ethnic tangle in Colombo, that K. Natwar Singh, minister of state for external affairs, was at pains to emphasise in Parliament that it was not an 'accord' but an agreement. To be precise, the one he had signed with Sant Harchand Singh Longowal on July 24, 1985 was entitled 'memorandum of settlement'. While Rajiv Gandhi wrecked it by going back on its terms, he was able to conclude the Sri Lankan accord only by going back on the two fundamentals on which rested India's entire mediatory effort since 1983.

One was that India was a mediator. It was for the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil groups to arrive at an accord of their own free will. Whether in Colombo, New Delhi, Thimpu, or Bangalore, India had played the role of a mediator. The other was that "this is a political problem and only a political settlement offers a long-term solution."

Under the Indo-Sri Lankan agreement India settled with Sri Lanka the terms of a solution to the ethnic issue and undertook to 'underwrite and guarantee' that settlement with its armed might. In the process it has expended Indian life, blood and money. In return, Sri Lanka recorded in an exchange of letters an 'understanding' which respected some of India's strategic concerns.

Now, a year later, the 'solution' to the ethnic problem has come unstuck; the time schedules stipulated and the procedures devised have been ignored; the guarantee has proved open-ended; the costs have mounted beyond expectations; India has alienated everyone concerned; President Jayewardene cleverly wants the 'understanding' on security matters to become reciprocal and weak; and Rajiv Gandhi has reaped unpopularity rather than praise for the accord. India looks foolish everywhere. Especially in the eyes of Indians who care to keep them open.

The agreement was concluded in haste and is flawed intrinsically. Elections to provincial councils were to be held within three months and in any event before the end of 1987.

There was no definite settlement at all on the heart of the matter – the powers of the councils. The proposals 'negotiated' from May 4, 1986 to December 19, 1986 were to be 'accepted'. The matters 'residual' were to be resolved between Sri Lanka and India. There was no provision for consulting the Tamils. That India bound itself not to allow its territory to be used for activities prejudicial to Sri Lanka was understandable. It is an obligation in international law, anyway. That it undertook 'to guarantee and enforce the cessation of hostilities' was also, perhaps, understandable. But why did India undertake 'to afford military assistance to implement these proposals' which provided the mere outlines of a settlement?

Flawed initiative. Rajiv Gandhi and J R Jayewardene

● ***Rajiv Gandhi has reaped unpopularity rather than praise for the accord. India looks foolish everywhere. Especially in the eyes of Indians who care to keep them open.***

The mess began from the very beginning. Just the day before the agreement was signed, the PM confidently told opposition leaders that the hostilities would cease within 24 hours after the signing. The day after the document was signed, Indian troops landed in the Jaffna peninsula. On August 1 the PM blithely told a public meeting in Allahabad that the Tamils "have got much more than what they were demanding."

This was before the councils' powers had been definitely specified. He also asserted "we have succeeded in getting certain things included in the accord which will strengthen our country". The claims became taller as the descent into the mess became deeper:

August 2, 1987: The PM addressed a massive public meeting in Madras and declared "there should be no sympathy for anyone who acts against this agreement." He added: "I am told no such agreement has been signed by any country in the world at least in this century. It is an agreement without any precedent in history. It is an agreement which does not have a parallel in the world." He did not reveal the identity of the person who provided this education. He said that the militants had agreed with the accord. It was not an imposition: "The militants could have reached an agreement with the Sri Lanka government in the past four years, if they wanted to."

August 4: LTTE leader V. Prabhakaran addressed a public meeting in Jaffna: "This agreement, concluded suddenly and with great speed between India and Sri Lanka, without consulting our people and without consulting us, our people's representatives, is being implemented with expedition and urgency . . . We made it emphatically clear to the Indian government that we were unable to accept this agreement. But the Indian government stood unbudging on the point that whether we accepted or did not accept the agreement, it was determined to put it into effect. We were not taken by surprise by this stand of the Indian government." The accord 'contains within itself clauses for binding Sri Lanka within India's superpower orbit' The PM offered him "certain assurances . . . I do have faith in the straightforwardness of the Indian Prime Minister . . . We decided to hand over our weapons to the IPKF."

August 5: Sri Lanka declared an amnesty for those who surrendered arms. At a symbolic ceremony Dileep

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Yogi surrendered a revolver to the defence secretary of Sri Lanka in the presence of Major-Gen. Harkirat Singh of the IPKF. Prabhakaran declared that LTTE would not allow the reemergence of PLOTE, EPRLF, and TELO as they were 'anti-social.'

September 1: LTTE declared that it had taken over the civil administration of the Tamil areas.

September 13: LTTE put forth some demands – end to Sinhala colonisation; closure of police and army camps, release of militants, etc.

September 15: LTTE launched a 'non-violent agitation' in support of its demands.

● ***The IPKF has cost the country Rs 97.8 crore – up to May 31, 1988. The death toll: 534 Indian soldiers; 800 militants and 1,700 civilians.***

September 19: Prabhakaran accused RAW of stirring up intra-group violence in Sri-Lanka.

September 20: Government of India warned LTTE of stiff action unless it stopped the acts of violence against other groups in which 100 Tamils and others had been killed.

September 26: LTTE leader Thileepan died after a 12-day fast.

September 28: The Indian High Commission and LTTE signed 'agreed minutes' on the setting up of an interim administrative council of 12 members. It was to comprise five from LTTE, two from TULF, two Sinhalese, two Muslims, one of whom was to be an LTTE nominee, and a chief administrator to be appointed from a list of three submitted by LTTE. Prabhakaran agreed to surrender 'the remaining arms' and to 'cooperate in the implementation' of the accord subject to the PM's assurances to him in July.

September 29: President Jayewardene duly set up the council with C.V.K. Sivagnanam, former Jaffna municipal commissioner and LTTE nominee, as administrator.

October 1: LTTE rejected the council and demanded appointment of another nominee, N. Pathmanabhan, as administrator.

October 2: New Delhi called LTTE's action a 'complete breach of faith' and contrary to the 'agreed minutes'. The 13th Constitution amendment bill and the provincial councils bill were gazetted.

October 3: Prabhakaran accused New Delhi of 'breach of faith' and of 'aligning' itself with Colombo.

October 4: 12 LTTE guerrillas, including two leaders Kumarappa and Pullendran, committed suicide after their Sri Lankan captors tried to shift them from Jaffna to Colombo.

October 7: Nearly 150 Sinhalese were killed by LTTE in retaliation for the suicides.

October 9: IPKF began a crackdown on LTTE bases.

October 26: Jaffna fell to IPKF after a long delay. Meanwhile, Maj-Gen. Harkirat Singh was replaced by Maj-Gen. A.S. Kalkat.

October 27: The PM said India's offer of ceasefire still stood if LTTE laid down its arms and eschewed violence.

November 6: PM and President Jayewardene held talks in New Delhi, after the SAARC summit in Kathmandu, on the devolution of powers to the council. The PM said "some problems had been solved while the remaining ones are being looked into". Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike said India's role was "an exercise of hegemony by a regional power over its weaker neighbours."

November 8: The Supreme Court of Sri Lanka approved both the Bills.

November 9: The PM made a major statement in Parliament on Sri Lanka. LTTE 'deliberately set out to wreck the agreement . . . massacred about 100 members of other Tamil militant groups'.

November 12: The 13th Constitution amendment and the provincial councils bill were passed by Sri Lanka's parliament. (On January 22 the election law was passed.)

November 19: Prabhakaran issued a definitive statement setting out his terms. India should "begin peace talks" and not "compel us to support fully the agreement without reservations."

November 20: India announced a two-day ceasefire effective the next day.

November 22: India rejected LTTE's terms.

November 26: India announced assurances to militants provided that they surrendered their arms.

December 15: LTTE announced its resolve to 'eliminate' all rival militant groups in northern and eastern Sri Lanka on the anniversary of its attack on EPRLF in the east. The announcement was made after two days of fighting with TELO and PLOTE.

January 15, 1988: Prabhakaran wrote to the PM asking for a ceasefire, changes in provincial councils proposals, and "a crucial role (for LTTE) in future negotiations" on them.

January 26: President Jayewardene held talks in New Delhi with PM.

February 27: J.N. Dixit said any attempt by Sri Lanka to circumvent India by talking secretly to militant groups would not be accepted.

● ***On May 22, Kittu, Prabhakaran's deputy, said that having taken on India militarily and politically, LTTE is now in a position to dictate terms.***

February 28: LTTE called for 'unconditional' talks with India.

March 2: Lt-Gen. K.B. Mehta, who retired from the army after participating in the IPKF, said in Bombay that a large section of the people in Sri Lanka are averse to the IPKF; it had suffered 'very heavy casualties'; the militants had not hesitated to use women and children; and LTTE's feelers were a ruse.

March 18: Natwar Singh told the Rajya Sabha that India would not accept a joint army operation with Sri Lanka and was prepared to talk to LTTE if it surrendered arms and accepted the accord.

March 21: Capt. Raheem of LTTE was flown back to Madras without Prabhakaran's response to PM's message on talks. His colleague Johny had fallen to bullets on his way back from the Tigers' den.

March 23: Authoritative press reports appeared of RAW negotiating with LTTE.

April 6: Natwar Singh explained in the Lok Sabha, J.N. Dixit's remarks to a pressman about 'certain payments made to LTTE in connection with' the accord. It was 'interim financial relief'.

April 14: Press reports of President JRJ's parleys with Uma Maheshwaran of PLOTE.

April 19: Press reports of a RAW-LTTE accord 'before the month end', LTTE being represented by Kittu and Rahim in Madras.

April 21: Complete normalcy would retun to the Northern and Eastern provinces 'very soon', IPKF's GOC, Lt-Gen. A.S. Kalkat, declared in Madras.

April 29: UNP won elections to the councils of North-central, North-western, Uva and Sabragamuwa provinces.

May 5: Natwar Singh referred to reports of secret talks between LTTE and Sri Lanka government and said any deal contrary to the accord would be rejected.

May 15: UNI reported from Colombo that Indo-LTTE talks had reached a 'crucial stage' and an announcement was expected in the next few days. The hitch was over the quantity of arms for surrender and LTTE's demand for a 52 per cent representation in the council.

May 22: Kittu told a weekly briefing that having taken on India militarily and politically, LTTE is now 'in a position to dictate terms'. He called for the scrapping of the bills and for fresh negotiations.

June 2: The UNP won the elections to the Western and Central provincial councils and on June 9 to the Southern council. Polls remain to be held in the northeast alone.

June 30: The Sri Lanka government said in a communique that it would hold elections to the councils of the northeastern province after New Delhi 'agrees to disarm totally LTTE'. It said that the PM had informed the president that LTTE had 'given indications of its willingness' to lay down arms and work the accord.

July 1: Kittu said in Madras that the talks with RAW had reached an 'advanced stage'.

Continued on page 13

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READERS' FORUM

LIFE, ON THE BRINK OF ENDURANCE

I returned from Jaffna only two weeks ago on the 6th of August after a fortnights stay. During this period I toured a good part of the peninsula and meet a cross section of people which left me with certain strong impressions which I would like to share with the Tamils abroad.

1. **The dearth of young and middle aged men is strikingly obvious. The reasons for this are not difficult to** work out. Not only the grim statistics confirm that up to two to three thousand have died in the past year alone, but the total loss of lives since the ethnic conflict began in the early eighties will run to many more thousands. Added to this is the mass exodus of many Tamils to foreign countries which includes the West and the Middle East.

Amongst the Youth who are left behind and are not directly involved in the Militant movements there is a desperate desire to seek greener pastures abroad. Exploiting their desperation are many so called Travel Agents who extort huge amounts of money with the promise of safe deposit in a foreign land regardless of whether it is legal according to the regulations of the Countries concerned. Many would reckon that this kind of action has brought the entire Sri Lankan Tamil Community into disrepute in the Western eyes. Further more there are many accounts of Families and individuals robbed of all their wealth by criminal Travel Agents who had disappeared after extracting their money.

Silent Resignation

2. The resignation of the Jaffna populace to face any eventuality. The Tamils in the Western world have a fairly vivid idea of the atrocities, destruction of property, the grim toll of human lives and the immense hardships the Jaffna people have endured in the aftermath of the Indo-Sri Lankan accord. The statistics have been repeated so often that we in the Western world even tend to silently switch off when the subject is mentioned. But when one meets with them face to face the silent resignation in their faces cannot escape notice. The resilience of the people has to be seen to be believed. Perhaps this is not unique to the Jaffna man and any human stretched to whatever degree of endurance will still improvise ways of keeping alive. The elementary facilities are restricted, the transport can stop running within a minutes notice, examinations as important as the Advanced level can be postponed without prior warning. Shops and Markets can be ordered to shut and people asked to observe a curfew on the whim and fancy of the security forces. During my short stay this happened at least twice. But the people have come to expect this as routine of their hard pressed lives. Nevertheless I felt that there is a limit to human tolerance and the Jaffna man is teetering on the brink of such endurance.

3. There is considerable support and loyalty to the LTTE by the majority of the Jaffna population. This is obviously an impression as one does not have the benefit of conducting an open poll to estimate popularity. As one Ayurvedic physican observed 'I respect them for their courage, conviction, discipline and self sacrificial stand.' However no Jaffna man is physically or emotionally fit to endure any further escalation of violence not withstanding their support for the LTTE.

4. The last and most distressing impression left in my mind was to see the educational system both in the schools and in the university dying a slow death. By far this is the most frightening prospect facing the Tamils who live in Sri Lanka today. The competition to enter the universities is unbelievably tough with the aggregate required to qualify being raised each year. The options to further education is woefully limited with Medicine and Engineering still dominating as the preferred courses in the minds of an average parent as it was fifteen years ago.

University Education stand still

The schools are adversely affected by destruction to buildings, libraries and laboratories. Hartley College, a leading educational institution is forced to conduct its classes in makeshift buildings remote from their school premises. St. Johns College is desperately collecting funds to rebuild their laboratory.

The university education is at a stand still in the whole of the nation let alone in Jaffna. But the Jaffna University is facing unique difficulties. There is a serious shortage of staff and personnel in virtually every department. This is in addition to extensive damage to University property. Jaffna Medical School is no exception, desperate for staff to keep their disciplines open. In my brief encounter with some of the Doctors at the Jaffna Hospital I was left with two impressions.

Firstly, they deserve our unstinted admiration and praise for what they are doing in caring for our people in the most difficult of circumstances.

Secondly, the Jaffna Medical School requires the support of every Sri Lankan Doctor working abroad.

A lot has been said about the ethnic conflict in the past five years. Far more has been said about the political wrangling and efforts to settle the dispute with the four main forces namely the Sri Lankan Government, LTTE, Indian Government and the Sinhala extremists who have all played their part to destroy or recreate the peace as the case may be. We have read and re-read scores of political analyses, and hundreds of view points from learned historians, politicians, religious leaders, academics and the like. Many of us are none the wiser except that these act as catalyst for relaxed conversation at friendly meetings and parties of Sri Lankan Tamils abroad. Without denigrating the vital **role played by the publication of such scholarly articles I must confess that the Tamil community in the North** and East has not tangibly benefitted by such actions. We need to ask ourselves as to what we can do, as humble members of our community to redress the situation in practical terms, however small the contribution may be.

Education Crucial

My humble suggestions would be to concentrate on Education. Economic rehabilitation crucial may be, but in the present context is a non-starter, until there are sure signs of some form of durable peace. The future of the Tamil community lies on the youth and the future of the youth depends on the education they can possibly receive. This statement may sound irrational when the youth have abandoned the books in preference to guns. Nevertheless we need to direct our attention to education, and education in the fullest sense and not merely to become Doctors, Engineers and Accountants. Most of us are products of some illustrious schools in Jaffna. We would do well to make contact with our alma mater, be aware of the needs of the institutions, mobilise support among the old boys and supply the needs. There are numerous ways of helping your old school. One possibility is to support a deserving student's education abroad. Each year students who are capable of qualifying the Cambridge entrance come through the system but they fall by

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the wayside due to lack of information, guidance and support. The Jaffna University and the Medical Faculty is another area which needs help. The Formation of Tamil Doctors Organisation in London is a welcome move in this direction as this would serve to help in specific ways with regard to many areas of need. Meeting the cost of foreign medical journals, willingness to spend short term assignments with the University are areas which need serious consideration. There is at present an attempt to set-up a Haemodialysis Unit by the Jaffna Doctors. The enthusiasm is there but they are hamstrung by lack of expertise. Many such examples can be quoted. There are many who are already engaged in supporting valuable projects such as the Jaipur Artificial Limb Centre. These efforts and all other forms of rehabilitation work deserve our praise.

As a community we need to think positive despite the extremity of our circumstances. Let us realise that the Youth who is the future of our society need to survive and be protected from the forces of darkness that has engulfed our conmmunity. We owe it to them.

Mahen Muthiah,
Consultant Physician,
Worksop
Notts.

From page 11

July 19: In a panel discussion in Colombo on 'One year of Indo-Sri Lanka Accord: an assessment', Dixit warned against 'new discussions' between Sri Lanka and Tamils while Lands Minister Gamini Dissanayake expressed dissatisfaction with the IPKF's performance – 'the fourth largest army in the world being held at bay by a couple of boys'.

On July 27 it was revealed in the Lok Sabha that the IPKF had cost the country Rs 97.8 crore – up to May 31 1988!.

The figures for death are 534 Indian soldiers; 800 militants and 1,700 civilians (Indian Express; July 25). Last March Ravi Rikhye estimated (THE WEEK, March 13-19), that the IPKF totalled 100,000 men and another 30,000 were being sent.

● ***RAW's role in the Sri Lankan issue calls for a probe. Imagine policemen negotiating political disputes . . .***
The only one who played his cards cleverly is the 20th century fox, President J.R. Jayewardene.

A year after the accord was signed, it is clear that:

1. The Government of India's assessments, political and military, in July 1987 were wildly wrong.

2. The accord was intrinsically flawed.

3. No gains have accrued to India's interests; the letter will lose value with the demand for a treaty.

4. India is unpopular with both sides, Sinhalese and Tamils.

5. The PM's policies were tailored to domestic ends and were based on showmanship.

6. Internationally, India looks ridiculous taking on the protege, LTTE, it had armed.

7. India is in a worse position in July 1988 than it was a year ago. Far from extricating itself, it is getting yet deeper and deeper in the mess with no end in sight.

8. RAW's role in the Sri Lankan issue before and after the accord calls for a probe. Imagine policemen negotiating political disputes.

9. LTTE is no less a sinner against India as well as the other Tamil militants. It has acted without scruples, humanity or sense.

10. The only one who has played his cards cleverly is the 20th century fox, President Junius R Jayewardene.

– A.G. NOORANI

(Courtesy of THE WEEK: Aug 14–20, 1988)

MY HEART WEEPS AND BLEEDS

by

Professor Kopan Mahadeva

My heart weeps and bleeds for the youth of my land
Of birth. They have been led into hate
And to kill at random. Was this caused by fate?
Or by the will of some big-headed man-gods?

How different are you, young ones, from each other?
You have indeed a thousand and one things in common
And just one, or may be two, points one could summon
Which are not same, yet pose no real cause for bother.

My heart weeps and pleads for the bewildered youth
Of my so-called race, whatever may be the truth
Of the concept of race (in these otherwise blessed
Civilized times) when considered in the scientific sense.

They are well-born and well-bred children, God's creations
Driven to the courting of death and destruction
Sadly, seemingly madly, their motivation
Being a convinced sense of self-preservation.

I now feel ashamed to say that I was born
In the Pearly Island. I really am. That I own.

Do our ancestral faiths preach us to kill and hate? If they do,
Then I opt not even to glance in the directions
Of those bloody beliefs. And I will not poke
The corpses of the disciples of such sickly religions
With a million million metred pole.

O, you men with power, slimy sinners in the saddle,
Do something, soon, to solve the Island's muddle.
My heart weeps when of hard-built homes I hear
And public buildings with savings and belongings set on fire,
The infrastructure of our impoverished, developing lands
Incinerated, demolished, destroyed--by our own hands.

Will the world give aid and assistance in view of such wanton waste?
What for aid? To burn and break and bury again, in hateful taste?

If A wants to be free and to himself rule,
Is it wrong if B aspires for these too?
If C seeks to secure his people's future
D could rightly do so too. The same applies to culture,
Language, religion, health and life and kin and kith.
Others' rights and liberties are wrongful things to play around with.

O, men of reason, justice, right and honour, wake up.
To open all eyes and minds, the leadership you must take up.
Do find the keys to the kingdoms of peace and love
And teach the youth of brotherly, sisterly, mutual love.

O, men with power, use it now and well. Be fair
To all the different sections in equal share.
Stop the killings, arson, rape, and usher amity
Or else abandon and proceed, forthwith, into history.

My heart weeps and bleeds for the youth of my land
Of birth. They have been led into hate
And to kill at random. Was this caused by fate?
Or by the will of some big-headed man-god?

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THE TRAGEDY OF THE TAMIL DROP-OUTS

R. Bhagwan Singh

In Bombay nobody starves. As the financial capital of India, the metropolis has earned a reputation for itself: an enterprising person can find no better place to make it big in. For the brave and the innovative there are also several underground avenues to make money – quickly and dangerously.

It was but natural for many of the desperados from the Sri Lanka Tamil militant groups, now out of a job' to probe Bombay for 'opportunities'. That a large percentage of crime in the city came to be dominated by Tamils from Tamil Nadu came as a great help. The Sri Lankan Tamils would have made it on their own, even without help. Their grip over Bombay's underworld has tightened considerably and little empires controlled by ex-militants began cropping up in Dharavi, Sion and Matunga – grounds where once the legendary Tamilian, Vardabhai, reigned supreme.

For anyone with some links in the Bombay underworld, Capt. Kumar is a familiar name. It is the pseudonym for a former senior leader of the Peoples Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), called Vamadeva. Disillusioned with the way the Tamil liberation struggle in the island has been taking over the years and a victim of the convulsions within his own PLOTE group, Vamadeva decided to quit and become 'Capt. Kumar'.

Ready to Help

Ask any Sri Lankan Tamil in Bombay and he will agree that Vamadeva is the new Vardabhai in the making. He has his men in every piece of action and like his notorious predecessor is always ready to help out a compatriot. When this correspondent finally found his headquarters at a Bandra hotel, there was only a little limping lad who claimed he was Vamadeva's cousin and an LTTE dropout. He said he helped Vaman with administrative work and was happy with his lot now, having lost heart after receiving a bullet in his right thigh.

"Sometimes the police come looking for us here, but we manage to tackle that problem. Vaman does not stay in this place, but at a house some distance away. This place is too risky for him," the cousin opened up after some coaxing. It was unlucky for the visitor, he said because Vaman had taken the Singapore flight only the previous night and was expected only after a week. "Many people come to Vaman for help and he obliges them. He does not bother if they are militants or otherwise and if they are from the PLOTE or the LTTE or the TELO . . . he helps," the young man said of his famous cousin. Capt. Kumar is a big operator with activities extending from smuggling household goods to the deadly international trade in drugs. And he is not alone. There are any number of ex-militants among the Lankan Tamil community involved in such activities, perhaps on a smaller scale.

Mohan is one such operator. Only 22 now, he admits he is a small man. But he has ambitions to make it to the top in the near future. A former member of the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO), he hopes to make a living as a courier of brown sugar out of India. "I have done a two-year term in a Bombay jail, after I was caught on 30 September 1985 at the Sahar airport with two kilos of heroin. My jail term included one year under the COFEPOSA," Mohan told this correspondent with a sad smile on his face.

Stepping into Danger

He had got the stuff from a friend, also a Lankan Tamil, who had promised him 5,000 American dollars at the delivery point in Cairo. This friend had worked on a ship for some time and saved enough money to buy two kilos of heroin at Rs 40,000 per kilo. Mohan was to make contact with another Lankan Tamil ("He was earlier in Bombay, so I knew him") in a Cairo hotel and deliver the two kilos for 40,000 US dollars. Mohan could keep his fee and deliver the rest – 35,000 dollars – to his 'employer' in Bombay.

Was it not risky, this business of smuggling heroin across and bringing dollars in? "Yes, I knew it was very dangerous. But what could I do? I was starving," Mohan replied after a pause. He continued: "When I left home and joined a militant group, I knew I was soon going to die. But at that time the thought that filled my dreams was that my death would be for the cause of my Tamil nation. Now I am stepping on danger to keep myself full."

Mohan had succeeded in his first attempt when he took a 'sample' across to Cairo, about a forthnight before he was caught at the airport. "That trip was meant to give me self-assurance while building up my employer's confidence in me," he explained. Even on the second trip, he said he had almost made it and would have boarded the plane but for a last-minute check following a tip-off from some rival group of smugglers. A few minutes before boarding, the police came into the lounge with sniffer dogs. There were two other Lankan boys with one kilo of heroin each for different people in Cairo and all of them were caught. Mohan's suitcase was ripped open and

Tamil youths in Bombay's Dharavi slum: haven for criminals

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the heroin was retrieved from the false bottom. "After that I received a good bashing at the hands of the police, followed by imprisonment for two long years," Mohan recalled bitterly.

Self-survival

There are any number of boys like Mohan sprinkled across the city of Bombay and their only hope for saving themselves from starvation is to smuggle the deadly stuff out of India, and not get caught by the sniffer dogs at the airport. Such activity goes on at the airports at Delhi and Madras too, but on a much smaller scale. Though the traffic is believed to be heavy, the Customs department does not appear to be adequately geared to tackle it. There seems to be a feeling among senior Customs officials that the Lankan Tamils are mostly involved in bringing in electronic goods and textiles from abroad.

"The Sri Lankans have never been found with drugs," the additional collector of Customs at Sahar airport, A.K. Raha, told this correspondent. "It is not the Lankans but mostly the Nigerians who have been caught . . . besides, the *International Drug Bulletin* published by the UNO has said that drug smuggling out of India is now on the decline." That only meant the Lankan Tamils are very lucky and very clear. According to Raha, most of the Lankan Tamils caught by his department were trying to sneak out of the Customs enclosure after their arrival from the Gulf countries. "They try to escape by forging the gatepasses. They are mostly small operators working for self- survival."

But anyone taking a close look at the Lankan Tamil settlements in Bombay will understand why Raha is wrong. "These men are traditional fishermen and it is not unlikely that the traffic between Bombay and Pakistan – which is the supply centre – is dominated by the Lankan," said a senior police officer in Bombay. The established dons of the drugs trade do not want to lose their own men to European prisons or rival marksmen, so they employ the cheap Lankan Tamil manpower as couriers. "There could be at least 2,000 of our Tamil boys in the various prisons in Europe and America," said a sad PLOTE leader Dharmalingam Sidharth. "It is a very disastrous situation as far as the Tamil community in the island in concerned."

Nothing to live for

The world over, there has always been a close nexus between the drug trade and liberation movements because it is the former which invariably becomes the major fund-raiser for buying arms and feeding the rebel ranks involved in the latter. All the Eelam groups are thus involved in drug-trafficking to some degree. Though they may deny it, drugs are being used by the displaced militants in the underworld. Explained a senior TELO functionary while introducing an addict, "This guy, Bruce Lee, would not even smoke a cigarette when he was a prominent member of a liberation group. He would display his rippling muscles and his prowess with the gun. Now he cannot even walk steadily, hooked to brown sugar."

Bruce Lee – that is not his real name, but one he took up six years ago when he left school to join the Eelam movement – mumbled his own excuse. "I was a very loyal TELO fighter but had to flee my country after the murderous attack on our cadres by the LTTE in early 1986, in which our leader Sri Sabaratnam too, was killed. Our group subsequently disintegrated and my own family was killed by the hunting Tigers. Now I have got nothing to live for, so I resorted to taking these drugs to escape the mental torture caused by bitter memories."

Then there is this 'Anbu' Anbazhagan, a 28-year-old from Tellipalai in Jaffna district, living for the past four years in different shady pads of Bombay. "I want to return home but then I cannot last even one hour without smoking brown sugar. What do I do? Can you help me get treated please?" Abnu spoke incoherently, his dreamy eyes half-shut.

Abnu had landed in Bombay in 1984, after spending three years in Paris and Germany. He had been working in Europe and had managed to save some money. But then he could bring into India only about 1,000 US dollars. So, he left the remaining amount with his friend Navan Prabhakaran, to be smuggled into Bombay. As his luck would have it, Navan was caught in his Paris hotel with some packets of heroin. "I incurred a loss of 50,000 dollars and hundreds of packets of heroin. I went crazy and since then I am on this suicide trip," Abnu said.

Gone are the Days

The list of such addicts could be never-ending and it does not appear that the governments – in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and the Union government – are seriously concerned about the plight of these miserable ex-militants. "Gone are the days when we were treated with respect due to a soldier. Now, the governments in India are visibly hostile to the Lankan Tamils, whatever be the public postures of the politicians here in order to get popularity with their electorates," said Sidharth of the PLOTE.

This pain is shared even by senior leaders of the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF). Said its secretary-general Appapillai Amirthalingam: "I feel there has been a failure to adequately appreciate the hardships of the Sri Lankan Tamils living outside the refugee camps and to provide for them. Young men who have dropped out of the various militant groups seem to be the worst hit. Our appeals to the Tamil Nadu government, made about three months ago, to give some means of subsistence to these men have gone unheard . . . "

According to Amirthalingam, the government of India provided only for the Lankan Tamils living in the refugee camps in Tamil Nadu. A few got some educational benefits through scholarships and reservations in admissions. Nearly one lakh of the others who had fled the island after the July 1983 Colombo riots, did not ask for any help from the Indian government at that stage, but a majority of them have now come to the end of their tether and are in very difficult circumstances. There was some response last year to an appeal from the Tamil groups for help and about 2,000 of the youth in dormant militant groups were given Rs 1,000 each at the rate of ten rupees per day for three months. But nothing was done after that. And even that first instalment, it was then suspected was paid under orders from the then chief minister, M.G. Ramachandran, to divert attention from the hefty Rs three-crore gift he had then given to his favourite group, the LTTE.

No Outside Help

The Lankan groups did not turn to any international funding agencies because they believed India would look after them. "As early as 1983, the TULF wrote to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) seeking help for the Lankan refugees flooding Tamil Nadu. But we were told by Delhi not to pursue our request to the UNHCR and that India would provide for all the refugees here. Maybe the central government did not want us to involve outside agencies in the Tamil problem, but then nothing much was done to keep their promise and help the refugees," Amirthalingam said.

Starting as great admirers of India as their sole savour, the majority of the Tamils from across the Palk Strait now appear to be unhappy with the manner in which the host country has treated them over the years. Things have gone bad even for moderates like the TULF leader Amirthalingam to openly express discontent. He said: "These young Lankan Tamils living in terrible conditions here seem to be nobody's concern. Even one year ago, I had written to then Tamil Nadu minister Panrutti S. Ramachandran – he was in charge of the refugees – about helping these militants. Some money was paid and after MGR's death, nobody cared much about the problem. I sent a list of 54 names of young ex-militants who approached me for help, to the Tamil Nadu government through one of its officers. This officer told the boys to go to the police 'Q' branch (which deals with local Naxalites when it is not going after Lankan militants). The 'Q' branch, in turn, told them to report there everyday. Now the boys who had no money to buy food had to find

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money to visit the 'Q' branch everyday. What is the crime they have committed for this kind of treatment?" Amirthalingam himself provided an answer: "One gets the impression that they (Indian government) are anxious to pressure the Lankan Tamils to go back." The senior leader commented ruefully: "But these young men are unable to return home because a number of them who ventured back became targets of attack by rival militant groups . . . it is high time that some arrangement to provide relief to these people was made without treating them as criminals to be rounded up and put behind bars whenever the Indian Prime Minister or any VIP visited Tamil Nadu."

Treated like criminals

"It is disgusting how the politicians here have used our Eelam issue for selfish purposes, for self-propaganda," remarked an ex-militant, now waiting to return home whatever the consequences. "It is better to go back and face the bullets from the LTTE or the IPKF, rather than continue this humiliating stay here."

Said an LTTE spokesman at his Indiranagar office in east Madras: "About 70 of our boys were picked up from here by the police on 18 April because your Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was visiting the city (for the AICC session at Maraimalainagar). They were released only on 25 April. All of us were taken away, barring a handful of injured ex-militants." The angry Tiger leader recalled that the police who knocked on the door that night had said that the boys were needed at the police station 'just for a few minutes for questioning.' But then they were taken away to the prison and locked up. "We had done nothing to deserve such treatment as though we were criminals."

The experience of the organiser at the Tamil Refugee Organisation (TRO), Yoganathan, appears to be even worse. A seven-member TRO team had gone to Vedaranyam on 11 February, 1988, in their ambulance with medical supplies to some of the Lankan Tamil refugee camps in that area. It was nothing unusual for them to be doing this kind of work for which they received funds from some international relief agencies and expatriate Tamils in Western countries.

The TRO team was staying at the hotel they usually put up in Vedaranyam when a police constable visited them. The deputy superintendent of police had come there, he said, and would like to see them. So, they went over to meet the police officer. On reaching the DSP's camp office, some constables checked out the ambulance in the presence of the officer. Only medicine packets were found. The officer then told the TRO to return home the next day and when they did so, he told them they were being charged under passport laws. They could get bail from the court, they were told.

Falsely charged

Yoganathan recalled the incident: "Of the seven, four of us had valid stay documents and pleaded with DSP Subramaniam that were were being treated harshly without proper reason. He would not listen. But a bigger shock awaited us when we went to the court, for there we were were told that we were being charged under the Explosives Act. The police charge sheet against us said we were carrying dynamite and anti-India pamphlets in the ambulance van and that the vehicle did not stop on being signalled to do so by the police."

The TRO official said he had then met the 'Q' branch officers at Coimbatore and explained the case. He had been assured that such things would not happen again. But the 'Q' branch wanted to be informed whenever the TRO team visited the area. The men are still on bail and they have got the ambulance released from the court on furnishing a security of Rs 50,000.

"We have stopped going to Vedaranyam after that incident. Now we cannot help the refugees in that area," Yoganathan said. However, he conceded that the police might have acted against the TRO since it was believed that the relief organisation had close ties with the LTTE. "It could be because all the LTTE boys in that locality had left the place and returned to Sri Lanka that the police decided to harass us instead," he said.

"The police have never looked at our problem as a sensitive social issue. To them it was just another law and order matter to be dealt with an iron hand," lamented K. Padmanabha, secretary general of the Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF). He appeared hurt that the Eelam boys, held in such great esteem by the Indian government until a couple of years ago, were now looked down upon as common criminals. But then it is a fact that there are also several of these ex-militants who have turned into criminals over the past couple of years. Several cases of dacoity have been reported and more seriously 'executions' of rival group members have taken place with an alarming frequency. The 'retired' captains and lieutenants in the Eelam groups have taken up jobs as gun-carriers for the forest smugglers in Tamil Nadu and its neighbouring states. The more desperate ones decided to rob Indian banks and were even caught. Madras city, Chingleput (East) range, Madurai, Thanjavur and Ramanathapuram became hives of underground activity of the Eelam boys, most of them taking to crime to ward off hunger. Others wanted to make enough money to buy a passage to their dreamlands in the West. The most harassed among the police officers on this issue is the superintendent of police Chingleput (East) range, K. Subbaiah. "Yes. They have kept us on the move constantly during the last two or three years. There have been many cases of dacoity and now they are also concentrating on stealing motorcycles," the SP told SUNDAY. He was of the opinion that the LTTE was not involved in such criminal activities and was considered a disciplined outfit by and large.

"Their problem, as I see it, is poverty. They are not able to get even one square meal a day. And my problem is that the one who commits a crime in my area vanishes. He goes away to another district or even to Bangalore or Andhra. It is difficult to keep a tab on them, for there are no exhaustive records with finger prints," Subbaiah said.

(Excerpts from a special report – SUNDAY magazine, an Ananda Bazar publication, Calcutta)

CITIZENS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN MISSING

Mr. Balasubramaniam Wijayanthan, aged 70, Chairman of the Trincomalee Citizens Committee, has been missing from his home since August 3. It is reported that he had taken away by a group of men at about 2pm on August 3 when he was at the office of the Citizens Committee located at the Urban Council building.

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Role Models for Heroism among Tamils

Sachi. Sri Kantha
(University of Toyko, Japan)

"Your son has died", the messenger spilled the sad news.

"Is that so? How did he die? Where did he receive the fatal wound?", the mother asked inquisitively.

"From what I heard, he was fleeing from the battle field and one of enemy's spears pierced through his back", murmured the messenger.

"A fleeing son; and a spear in his back! What a shame?, fumed the mother. Her sadness turned into anger. "I had lost my father, brother and husband in the on-going battle and nothing is worse for me to lose my son. What I'm ashamed is that his fatal wound was in his back", the Tamil mother screamed.

The messenger was dumbfounded for words.

"Now I'll leave for the battle field to search for my son. If your word proved to be true, I'll mutilate the breasts which fed him the life spirit" thundered the mother.

And, after a while, there she was in the middle of the battle field, turning the bodies of soldiers, horses and elephants in search of her departed son.

Had he brought fame for his family or shame for his mother? That was the question pondering her at the time. Finally she located his smiling, youthful face, spattered with blood.

Anxiously, she turned his body to look for the fatal wound. There was'nt anything in his back. The messenger was wrong!

Her son had received the fatal wound right in the centre of the chest. The mother's eyes shed tears. Those tears told the story of heroism she fed to him with the breast milk.

What I had described above have been told umpteen times by Tamil poets in diverse forms. This anecdote had also been enacted in numerous folk plays, theatre, dance dramas and even in Tamil movies. Though the poets and actors would have changed, the central theme remains the same. Tamils adore heroism from ancient times. They had been a race of warriors. To the international audience, Prof. K. Kailasapathy succintly summarised these themes in his 1968 classic book, *Tamil Heroic Poetry* (Oxford, Clarendon Press).

It is often expressed that the Tamils had lived in peace for thousands of years. Nothing could be further from the truth. From the poets who lived in the Sangam Age (two millenia ago) to our contemporaries like Subramanya Bharathi and Kavi Arasu Kannadasan, Tamils extolled the virtue of heroism in the battle field. *Pura Nanooru* poetry is all but anything about the bravery and chivalry of Tamil masses.

The flags of Chera (Flower), Chola (Tiger) and Pandiya (Fish) were considered as venerable objects and it was the duty of Tamil youth to safeguard the dignity of these flags. Their aims were harnessed to raise the flags in the far corners of India, Sri Lanka and South East Asian territories. Verses of great Tamil poets like Kambar, Avvaiyar and Jeyam Kondaar praise the virtues of fighting for a noble cause.

In one of his popular songs for the children (*Paapaa Paatu*), Subramanya Bharathi provides the following advice:

In front of those who do misdeeds
do not get any fear – Paapaa
stomp and attack them Paapaa – and
spit on their faces too Paapaa

("Paathaham seipavaraik kandaal
payam kollalahathu Paapaa
Mothi mithithu vidu Paapaa – Avar
Muhathil umizhnthuvidu Paapaa")

Kavi Arasu Kannadasan expressed similar sentiments in a lyric for one of the MGR's great movies, "Mannaathi Mannan" in mid 1950s. In translation, the verses read like this:

Fear is none but cowardice – and
the symbol of Dravidas is chivalry
At six or at hundred one could die – but
Protection of homeland is the duty

For the growing foetus in her body
a Tamil mother teaches bravery
In challenging times, to protect her face
there will rise her progeny

Many have lived and many have died – but
in the minds of masses who stay long?
Those blessed with great heroics and chivalry
live forever in the annals of history

The Tamil original of this lyric is as follows:

"Achcham enpathu madamaiyadah
Anjaamai Dravidar udamaiyadah
Aarilum saavu noorilum saavu
Thayakam kaapathu kadamaiyadah"

"Karuvinil valarum mazhalaiyin udalil
Thairiyum valarpaal Thamil Annai
Kallangam piranthal petraval maanam
Kaathida ezhuvaan Aval pillai"

"Vaalnthavar kodi – Marainthavar kodi
Makkalin manathil nirpavar yaar?
MaPerum veeram, Maanam kaapoor
Sarithiram thanile nirkinraar"

In our times, it was MGR himself, by his more than 120-odd movies spanning four decades (1936-76), who instilled the "fighting spirit" to the younger generation of Tamils. He was well versed in the traditional martial arts of Tamils such as horse-riding, fencing, wrestling and *silambam*. Even MGR's miraculous escape in real life, from a near-fatal gun attack in 1967 seemed to infuse the sense of emulation among the young Tamils. As one journalist noted recently about MGR's cinematic career, "He created the image of an action hero who used his fists more than his tongue. He showed the masses through his films the importance of fighting to help themselves" *(Far Eastern Economic Review, 4 Feb, 1988)*. It is a happy coincidence that the LTTE Tamil rebels who grew up watching MGR's heroic exploits in the celluloid screen, received considerable emotional and material help from him in their struggle against their enemies.

Two years ago, in an interview for the *Newsweek* magazine, the LTTE leader Prabaharan was asked whether he had received any military training in Cuba. After denying it, he was reported to have said: "I use my natural instincts and I watch war films and Westerns by Clint Eastwood". An American journalist Jared Lubarsky wrote a humorous piece on this quip in the *Mainichi Daily News* (8 Aug, 1986) of Japan. "This particular freedom fighter learned his notions of warfare from Eastwood spaghetti Westerns. As far as I can tell, Eastwood's loftiest strategy in these movies is to shoot the shit out of anything that moves. That doesn't bode well for the future of Sri Lanka. If the president of the United States can derive his whole outlook on life from the movies, why shouldn't a Tamil Tiger?".

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900 JVPers in Police custody –IGP

Sri Lankan police have detained about 900 members of a Marxist group accused of assassinating hundreds of government officials and supporters.

Inspector-General of Police Ernest Perera told Reuters in an interview that the members of the People's Liberation Front (JVP), which has been blamed for 419 killings since August 1985, had been held for the past year.

"We have in all something like 900 in custody as it is." he said in the first official statement by a Sri Lankan Police Chief about the number of JVP detenues.

The JVP launched the assassination campaign as a protest against the Indo-Sri Lankan pact aimed at ending the island's Tamil conflict.

Police sources said the JVP members were being detained under emergency regulations and the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which give police wide powers to detain subversive suspects. Suspects can be detained without trial under such legislation.

Perera, appointed on August 1, said the JVP had created an atmosphere of fear in areas where they operated and had a military wing which attempted to give the impression of being an effective force

The Front, drawn mainly from the majority Sinhalese community in South and central areas, has killed 419 government officials and supporters since the pact was signed by India and Sri Lanka in July last year, he said.

Perera declined to give an estimate of the JVP's strength but other police sources put it at about 2,000 officials plus 8,000 supporters.

"I don't think their numbers have increased and I don't think we have reached an insurrection type of situation. It's not a mass of people taking arms against the government" he said.

He said the group had armed itself with 300 to 400 shotguns but added he was more worried about the 90 automatic weapons it had stolen from police and army personnel.

Perera said the presence of 52,000 Indian troops, posted in the Northern and Eastern provinces to enforce the peace pact, had helped the security forces concentrate on the JVP problem.

He said the 26,000-strong regular police force was thinly spread and it's present ratio of one policeman to 800 people was far from the ideal one to 100 in other countries.

"We'll have to increase our police strength to 32,000 and we have a flood of applicants already." he said.

He said there have been JVP infiltration in the police force. "But I don't think it's as intense as it's made out to be."

He said police had evidence that a few fomer policemen and former members of the security services had given weapons training to JVP cadres. –(Reuter)

VARSITY TEACHERS CONDEMN ATTACK ON CIVILIANS

"The USTA condemns and strongly protests against the seemingly calculated and indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population by members of the IPKF in the aftermath of incidents for which ordinary civilians can in no way be responsible." declared the Jaffna University Science Teachers' Association in a press release issued on 30.8.88. They further state these beatings and sometimes shootings have followed a pattern:–

Pt. Pedro:	1st June
Chulipuram:	19th July
Jaffna:	17th & 18th August
Karainagar:	20th August
Inuvil:	22nd August

Those beaten include women, university employees, students, and others maintaining essential services at the IPKF's invitation and on the basis of the protection promised by them. Three persons totally unconnected with any violent activity were shot dead on 18th August by the CRPF, apparently in reprisal for an incident that took place elsewhere an hour earlier. In one incident, a bridegroom was made to get down from his car at Uduvil Junction and was virtually stripped publicly while his bride looked on in agony. People have been beaten without warning by soldiers making forced entry into premises. Several of those admitted to hospitals have suffered hearing impairments from blows received on the head with heavy gadgets.

The USTA expresses grave concern at statements made by very high ranking IPKF officials which are threatening in character and appear to justify the present pattern of activity.

The USTA also expresses grave concern over the IPKF Town Commandant's statement to a University delegation (Uthayan: 30th August) to the effect that: "Assaults on civilians cannot be avoided when IPKF personnel are subject to attack".

When innocent Sikh civilians were attacked and killed in the wake of Mrs. Indira Gandhi's assassination, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi himself condemned such indiscriminate collective punishment as madness. What when acts of a similar nature are done by a 'disciplined' army?

There are periodic reports of army officers being attacked by mutinous troopers. Is it a viable basis to run an army to have other troops launch a general assault on troops belonging to the same ethnic minority as the muti nous trooper(s)?

Answers to these questions will throw considerable light on the IPKF's role in this country.

The USTA points out that far from restoring democracy and normalcy, the IPKF's present conduct will only lead to anarchy, increasing casualties and will render almost hopeless the present climate of assassination and senseless internecine violence, with incalculable consequences for India itself.

The USTA calls upon all responsible Indians to make an urgent reassessment of the role of India's forces in this country. We demand that the IPKF immediately cease its present mode of conduct and make its position clear and consistent.

Over 200 angry protesters greeted Sri Lankan Prime Minister Premadasa and his wife when they visited Springvale, Australia. The protesters, members of the Ceylon Tamil Association gathered outside Springvale City Hall, on 30.7.88 waving placards and chanting slogans. Dr. Rajan Rasiah, Vice President of the Association said that the protest was organised to drive home to the P.M. their grievances with the Sri Lankan Government which had not treated the minority Tamils reasonably.

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Jaffna Hindu parents *seek partner for their daughter, 30 years, Mars afflicted, students considered. Details to M 246 c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Hindu Parents *seek qualified working partner for pretty 25 year old graduate daughter, British citizen, employed in London. Students completing their studies also considered. Please reply to M 247, c/o Tamil Times.*

Brother *seeks suitable bridegroom for Jaffna Tamil sister, 26 years, stenographer in Colombo, Mars in eighth house. Reply with horoscope and details to M 248, c/o Tamil Times.*

Tamil Christian Parents *seek partner for their son, 28, holding good position, owning house in U.K., caste, religion no bar. Reply M 249, c/o Tamil Times.*

OBITUARY

Mrs Sinnathangam Suppiah *(Retired Head Mistress, Arunasalam Vidyasalai, Alaveddy, Sri Lanka) wife of the Late Arunasalam Suppiah, mother of Dr. S. Sivathasan (Gillingham, Kent), Dr. Sivarupavathy (Wallington, Surrey) and the late Sivapackthan, mother-in-law of Dr. Sivadevi and Sivasubramaniam passed away on 20.8.88 and was cremated at the South London Crematorium, Streatham Vale, Surrey. – 15 Crichton Avenue, Wallington, Surrey.*

Mrs Violet Ponnuthurai *(nee Asirwatham) wife of the late Mr. C.S. Ponnuthurai mother of Shanthi (U.K.) and Dr. Sarvanesan (Germany) passed away on 6.7.88 in Colombo.*

Prof.A.Sathasivam *Professor of Tamil, Peradeniya University, Sri Lanka died of a heart attack on 1.7.88 at his house in Araly, Sri Lanka and was 62 years old at the time of his death.*

Mrs Nagaretnam Subramaniam *beloved wife of the late Sinnathamby Subramaniam (Manipay), loving mother of Sivagnanam (London), Neelakanthy, Nagalatchemy, Thirupathy, Loganayaki, Bagirwathi and Kumarasingam (all of Colombo), sister of Thangaratnam Cameron Vanniasingam (Manipay) passed away on 27.8.88 in Colombo – 122 Alexandra Road, London SW19 7JY.*

G.S.Nathan *beloved wife of Sotheswary, father of Radhika, Sangeetha, Lakshmanan passed away on 26.8.88 at Croydon, Surrey, U.K. – 50 Leighton Street, W. Croydon, Surrey CRO 3SB.*

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couples On their recent marriage:

Thanendran *(son of Mr. & Mrs. K. Raviraj, 77 Roodegate, Basildon, U.K.) and* **Menaka** *(daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Sivasubramaniam, 24 Orchard Grove, Edgware, U.K.) on 28.8.88 at Lola Jones Hall, London SW17)*

Ravikulan *(son of Mr. & Mrs. P.Kulasingam, Madras) and* **Thaksha** *(daughter of Mr. & Mrs. S. Ramanathan, Singapore) on 29.8.88 at Shree Ganapathy Temple, London SW19.– Flat 4, 24 Mansfield Road, Ilford, Essex IGI 3AZ.*

Joseph *(youngest son of Mr. & Mrs. C.T. Thomas of Tiruvalla, Kerala, India) and* **Dr. Elizabeth** *(only daughter of Mr & Mrs D. S. Ambalavanar of New York) on 2.7.88 at St. Andrews' Kirk, Poonamalle High Road, Madras. South India.*

Tharmabalan *(son of Mr. & Mrs. K. S. Kailasapillai, Uyarapulam, Anaikoddai, Sri Lanka) and* **Langamany** *(daughter of the Late Kathirgamu & Mrs. S. Kathirgamu, Ealalai, Sri Lanka) on 28.8.88 at 32, Rue du Faubourg du Temple, 75011, Paris,)*

Shailendra *(son of Mr. & Mrs. R. Sothinathan, 79 Holland Road, Eastham, London E6 2EP) and* **Sugunna** *(daughter of Mr. & Mrs. S. Sarvanandarajah, 55 Rushgrove Avenue, Colindale, London NW9 6RG) on 27.8.88 at Seven Kings Hall, 785 High Road, Ilford, Essex, U.K.*

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

October 1st 7.30, p.m. Tamil Play **"Yugatharmam"** *by* **Tamil Performing Arts Society** *at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 4A Castletown Road, London W14. For details Telephone 01-459 4335 and 01-521 8201.*

At BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, Tel. 01-381 3086/4608

October 8th 7.00 p.m. **Veena** by **Doreswami Iyengar**

October 15th 7.00 p.m. and October 23rd 6.30 p.m. **Bharatanatyam** by **Alarmel Valli.**

October 22nd 7.00 pm. Dedication to Baba – Bhajans & Devotional songs by Mrs. Damayanti Puri

October 22nd 6.00 p.m. to midnight – **Young Peoples League get-together** at the **Asian Chaplaincy Hall.** *Contact Fr. Johny Fernandes, Tel. 01-222 2895.*

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Padma Subrahmanyam
A Dancer with Unique Quality

I had visited the British Museum a couple of times, but was never aware that it possesses a large collection of Amaravati sculptures – about 120 pieces – ranking with the Elgin marbles and the Assyrian reliefs and they form the only major series of early Indian sculpture outside India.

For nearly three decades these sculptures were not for public viewing since some erosion was found on them in 1960, when they were on display in the main staircase of the museum. After going through chemical tests, they are now kept in a 'sacred' – temperature and humidity controlled – room in the lower ground floor, where I had the privilege recently to view them, when I accompanied Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam, the scholarly dancer.

Padma was in London with her troupe to give performances and to have a workshop at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan London Centre, in connection with the Bhavan's Golden Jubilee celebrations. When she arrived in U.K. she wished to visit the India Section of the museum, and the very next day we went to the British Museum in Bloomsbury. That was her first engagement, and that was Padma's uniqueness.

Padma is a research scholar and obtained her doctorate for her thesis "Karanas in Indian Dance and Sculptures", from the Annamalai University. It is her research and her dancing, like the knight's move in chess, that created a tremendous effect in the Bharatanatyam field. She explored many things and narrowed the gap between academic theory and the active practice of dance. She revealed that *Karana* is not merely a static posture; that it has three elements in it: *Sthana* or static posture for the body, a *Cari* or a movement of the legs, and a *Nritta Hasta* or a movement for the arms. She explains that every sculptured figure depicting a *Karana* is like a still photo of a moving dancer.

She is emphatic in that *Nritta* is not merely mundane physical action natural to real life but action which has an aesthetic value. It is that act that must be pleasing both subjectively and objectively through a radiation of grace and beauty.

The other major aspect of her dancing is her usage of the realistic elements of the *lokadharmi* technique with the stylistic and sophisticated *natyadharmi* style. *Natyadharmi* is formal and perhaps easier to be handled, whereas the *lokadharmi* is informal and requires consummate skill, understanding, mental involvement, imagination and sobriety. Padma says that using any one style will be monotonous and she uses these styles according to the needs of the theme.

Actually *lokadharmi* when performed well is more easily understood by an uninitiated audience. Positively it was Padma's "Krishnaya Tubhyam Namah", a *tour de force*, in the *lokadharmi* style staged in the early seventies, which propelled her into fame. And today there is wide consensus that more than anything else it is the rise of Padma that has effected Kamala Luxman's preeminence as Kamala's own advert had on Balasaraswati.

Padma started her research on the sources of Bharatanatyam and evolved a dance style which she calls "Bharatanrityam". She argues that the term *Natya* encompasses in itself all the artistic elements of the theatre art including drama and in fact the present Bharatanatyam is more *nritta* and *nritiya* in its nature than natya in its true sense.

Her dance is unique. One critic observed: "Padma is perhaps the one woman dancer today who can enter into a contest with the Supreme dancer, equal him in his dancing exploits and throw the legendary triumps of Siva at Thiruvalankadu in the transience of Time" It is full of dedication and divinity. If we are moved by *bhakti* and *bhava* in M.S. Subbulakshmi's singing, we can see those qualities in Padma's dancing. That explains why the audience is moved to tears at Padma's recitals. She achieves the *Sattvika abhinaya* or bliss with great ease. The music and her themes are closely knit. She dances for the vedic themes, Sangam literature, teveram and even to the music of the great Russian composer Peter Ilyich Tschaikovsky.

While her research enlarges the scope for choreographers, it has induced many other dancers to learn "Natyasastra" and other texts. Kamala Luxman too showed great interest in research.

Padma's London programmes were well-attended by capacity crowds including many dancers, dance teachers and students. In recent years there is an increasing number of dance schools, teachers, students, and even *rasikas* in London, and actually it was an appropriate time for Padma's recital. She left behind an indelible impression on every audience before which she performed.

The British Museum Authority has invited Dr. Padma for a series of lecture demonstrations during next summer and if she accepts this invitation, lovers of the art form in this country can look forward to another treat.

–Mali

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